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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 002118

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [RU](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: EUMM SEEKS CHANGES TO PROPOSED INFO
EXCHANGE WITH MOD

REF: TBILISI 2050

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Begin Summary and Comment: In a November 12 meeting, European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) Head Hansjoerg Haber told the Ambassador he is seeking additional modifications to the proposed Exchange of Information Agreement which is pending signature between the EUMM and the Georgian Defense Ministry. The modifications would require Georgians to notify EUMM 24 hours in advance of significant troop movements or movement of heavy military equipment. The areas affected would be the area between the main east-west highway and South Ossetia and a 20 kilometer distance from the administrative boundary with Abkhazia. Currently the EUMM believes it does not have enough visibility on Georgian east-west troop movements. While Haber said the Georgians would resist these modifications, he sees it as necessary to be able to give the Georgians, "a clean bill of health" and ensure transparency. He solicited our support to this end, but he did not respond to our previous suggestion to seek a similar agreement with Russia (reftel). In a follow up conversation on November 13, Haber said he had no authority under the Sarkozy-Medvedev ceasefire agreement to negotiate an agreement with the Russians. He suggested the issue be discussed at the November 18 Geneva meeting. Comment: Post supports Haber's efforts to increase transparency but a failure by the EUMM to seek an agreement with Russia could create an unfair penalty on the Georgian side, especially if the EUMM cites Georgia for any "violations." End Summary and Comment.

Checkpoints: Military not Cops, Unauthorized Weapons

12. (C) Haber said the Russians gave the EUMM a list of 20 checkpoints where they claim the Georgians have stationed military troops equipped with sniper pistols and RPGs, both of which the Russians cite as violations of the cease-fire agreement. The EUMM found that this allegation was untrue in some circumstances, but in others it seems to have merit, as in Zveno Nikozi. The Ambassador pointed out that these may have been Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) paramilitary elite troops, a group much like Italian Carabinieri forces, who have a camp just south of Tbilisi. General Gilles Javier, Haber's Deputy maintains the tactics and behavior of the forces in question, not to mention the camouflage uniform patterns, suggest they are military personnel. Haber said that Minister of Internal Affairs Merabishvili has denied that military troops are present, citing the superior performance of MOIA personnel over military personnel in fulfilling such a role.

EUMM Requests Prior Notice

13. (C) According to Haber, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov is interpreting point four of the cease-fire agreement, which states that "Georgians must return to their barracks," as meaning Georgian military troops should return to post and

remain there. Haber added that he certainly didn't expect the Georgians to give up their sovereignty, and after all, he said, the Russians had not negotiated the cease-fire in good faith. Even at that time it was likely that they were negotiating Russian bases in South Ossetia and had no intent to pull back Russian troops to pre-August 7 positions. As it stands, there is ambiguity in the cease-fire agreement which needs to be clarified in order for the EUMM to be able to give the Georgians a "clean bill of health." Haber maintains that the Georgians are moving troops and weapons which may well be innocent, but because they are not informed which may well be innocent, but because they are not informed about these movements, the EUMM cannot state unequivocally what they are doing. Thus, the proposal for prior notification. The proposed information sharing agreement would require the Georgians to notify the EUMM 24 hours in advance of any movement of military troops (defined as 100 or more) or military equipment (defined as artillery and 18mm mortars, or larger, and all tanks and armored vehicles), except for transit purposes and/or under special circumstances (natural or man-made disasters.) The areas affected by the notification would be the North direction from the Igoeti-Gomi section of the main highway (not including the main highway) and a 20 kilometer distance from the administrative boundary with Abkhazia.

The Likely Scenario

14. (C) Haber cited as an example Toncha, a small village just outside the South Ossetia administrative boundary directly east of Akhalgori, where the Georgians are building an encampment with artillery and infantry. From the position of Toncha, Georgian troops can fire on Akhalgori with a

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medium range howitzer. Recently, the Russians came across the administrative boundary just to show themselves to the Georgians so they would know the Russians are aware of their activity. Haber hypothesizes this could escalate into clashes between the two groups, and thus the need for the proposed information exchange agreement to promote transparency. The Georgians argue that they need to protect Tbilisi from this vantage point, so that if Russian troops should head out on the east-west highway, Georgians would be able to fire on them from the rear.

Georgians: Diplomatic Pressure Not Enough

15. (C) With this example in mind, Haber will ask Georgians to notify EUMM 24 hours in advance of military movement. Haber sees this as a compromise between what is already written and what the Georgians perceive the agreement to mean. Haber is aware that the Georgians will perceive this as unfair, as no comparable pressure will be applied on the Russians. Haber said that there would be a large diplomatic price for Russia to pay if it attacked Georgian troops, but for Georgians this rings hollow. The Georgians told him, "After two months though it will be business as usual between the Russians and the Europeans -- diplomatic pressure alone will not be enough to deter them." Haber opined that for the Georgians, the Russians have not finished their aggressive stance. In Georgian eyes, the Russians were still pushing for regime change, thwarting NATO aspirations, and blocking alternatives to Russian pipelines.

TEFFT